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their work will not bring success. They will become sickly, weak, and helpless.

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The virtue of humility is extolled at length, as one who knows the Karen people might expect. The people are told that he who does not humble himself but exalts himself, who regards his relatives with disdain, makes forays, is extortionate, beats others for nothing, and, in general, does as he pleases, will die young. Such a man will be punished by the Lord of heaven, losing his drums and money, being left wretched and childless, unable to work, without means to purchase anything, and to die without apparent cause.

Cursing is condemned, and its retributive consequences are shown in the story of a man who was the father of ten children and cursed one of his brethren without a reason. The curse did not harm the one on whom it was pronounced, but reacted upon the other, causing the death of every one of his children. Among the other evils denounced and forbidden are covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, and exacting fines for the infringement of arbitrary rules or for trespass on one's property. The condemnation of such vices, as well as the encouragement of mutual helpfulness, filial piety, generosity to the needy and helpless, and fear of punishment by the Lord of heaven, show that the Karen had no mean standards of personal conduct. Whether these ideals were lived up to or not is another question. In fact, cursing a person by whom one had been injured was a recognized form of retaliation and punishment. It was necessary to go to his house, stand in front of his door, and recite certain verses imprecating him. The person venting his wrath must do this three evenings in succession, taking with him on the third evening an expiring fagot, an addled egg, and the scrapings from the dish out of which the pigs are fed. On this occasion he closes his imprecation with the words: "May his life go out like this dying fagot. May he be without posterity like this egg. May his end be like the refuse of the dishes."

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Theoretically, the principle of the old Mosaic law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye was valid among the Karen, but it was tempered in the sayings of the elders as follows: "In order not to subject ourselves to fines and punishment, we must allow others to treat us as they choose. If we are struck, we must not strike again. If one strikes your head, strike the floor. If some one blinds you, do not blind him in return. The long is before; the short is behind [that is, the future is long; the past is short]. Love of

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CHAPTER XVI

WARFARE AND WEAPONS

Private Forays

628 787 701 Two or three generations have elapsed since the Karen in Lower Burma indulged in their old-time warfare, which consisted of forays secretly organized and carefully executed against their enemies. In the Toungoo Hills and in Karenni these raids have been suppressed only in recent years, as the regions named have been brought more fully under British rule. The people used to call such expeditions "ta hseh hsu ma beu," which means a strong and concealed thrust. A foray was undertaken by an individual to avenge a personal wrong committed by an inhabitant of another village. It was a recognized method of settling a grievance, like the sheriff's execution of the judgment obtained in a suit at law in a more civilized community. The conflict was not one between village and village. but between personal enemies. The man who inaugurated the foray set up his spear in the open space of his village and marked a white line half-way up on the spear shaft. Those who were ready to go on the expedition and renounce the right of their families to an indemnity in case they were killed, placed their marks above the half-way line, while those willing to join without making this renunciation added their marks below it. Of course, the chicken bones had to be consulted both as to the feasibility of the raid and a favorable time for it.

726 789 When this time had arrived, the organizer of the foray killed a hog or a fowl; took a bit of the heart, liver, and entrails; minced them together; added a little salt, and wrapped the mixture in a leaf. This talisman was then entrusted to two spies, who were to carry it to the village where the foe dwelt. They were admonished to note whether or not any spikes were planted along the paths leading to the place, the best means of access thereto, and the precise location and general arrangement of the village. Finally, they were to visit with the inhabitants there and find an opportunity of dropping the contents of their leaf into the food of their hosts. If they succeeded in this last stratagem, they were supposed to

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have swathed the heads of their foes. That is, their hosts by partaking of the talisman would become so confused as to fail to seize their weapons when needed for defense and would be overwhelmed by the enemy. Unlike the spies of Israel these Karen spies, on their return, usually gave a favorable report and displayed great eagerness for the combat.

The instigator of the foray now sent out for his men, who came not only from his own village, but also from neighboring ones where he had friends and blood-brothers. He might gather in as many as two hundred warriors. These he feasted, but before passing around the liquor he poured some on the ground as a kind of libation, while praying:

"Lord of the seven heavens and the seven earths. Lord of the rivers and streams, the mountains and hills. We give thee liquor to drink and rice to eat. Help us, we entreat thee. We will go forth now and attack yon village. We have swathed the heads of the inhabitants. Assist us. Render their minds oblivious and cause them to forget themselves, that they may sleep heavily and their slumber may be unbroken. Let not a dog bark at us, nor a hog grunt at us. Grant that the villagers may not seize a bow, sword, or spear. May the Lord help my children and grandchildren who go to attack yon village, and may he deliver them from all harm. May they subdue their enemies and not be lost. May they be delivered from the bow, the sword, and the spear."

After this prayer the elders drank in turn of the liquor, and it was then circulated freely among the assembled warriors. The instigator of the foray now killed a fowl, preparatory to inspecting its bones for a favorable omen as to the success of the undertaking, but before the inspection he offered up the following petition:

"Fowl, possessor of superhuman powers, fore-endowed with divine intelligence, thou scratchest with thy feet and peckest with thy bill. Thou goest to Hku Te (the king of death). Thou goest to The Na (monarch of death). Thou goest to Shi U, the brother of God. Thou goest into the presence of God. Thou seest unto the verge of heaven and unto the edge of the horizon. I now purpose to go and attack yon village. Shall we be hit? Shall we be obstructed? If we go, shall we suffer? Shall we die by the bow? Shall we be pierced by the spear? Shall we grow weary or exhaust ourselves? If so, reveal thyself unfavorably."[1]

[1] This prayer, in which superhuman powers are attributed to the fowl, is similar to prayers of the Kenyas of Borneo, who ascribe like powers to the pig.

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CHAPTER XXVI

MAGIC

The division lines between religion, magic, and science, as these matters appear to primitive peoples, are hard to trace. In truth, the three fields so overlap and interpenetrate that it is almost impossible to tell where one begins and the other leaves off. However, religion for them may be defined as consisting of the socially recognized practices and conceptions belonging to the tribe or group and relating to the supernatural powers or forces. Through their conceptions and practices the people try to enter into relation with these powers for their own welfare. Magic may be defined as the art of influencing the action of spirits and occult powers for the purpose of serving private ends. This art may involve resorting to secret and sinister means for an anti-social purpose. As many, if not most, of the magical rites are concerned with matters of health, the realm of magic includes a portion of that of science, especially of medical science, which makes use of the effects of roots, herbs, and minerals on the human body, as well as of other treatments, which form the beginning of a real scientific knowledge.

The underlying principle of Karen magic seems to be the "pgho," that all-pervasive impersonal power which is so potent for good or ill. By observing certain ceremonies and incantations the individual is thought to be able to induce the "pgho" to take up its abode in some person or object and have it accomplish the end he has in view.

The belief in the power of magic doubtless grew out of incidental observation and primitive experimentation with the unseen forces surrounding all human life, in which coincidence of events was ignorantly seized upon as establishing a necessary connection between them. That the magical power of an alleged charm rests on very insecure foundations is illustrated in an experience which I had with a Karen, who brought me two magical stones about the color and size of horse-chestnuts to be tested. The Karen had inherited these stones, which had long been regarded in his family as charms against injury by weapons. He wanted me to fire my

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789 751 gun at them; but I had one of my native helpers fire the gun, in order to preclude the deduction on the part of the owner of the stones that a foreigner's handling of the gun had prevented the working of the charm. The discharge of the weapon knocked the stones to bits to the great surprise of the owner, who exclaimed repeatedly that the stones were worthless after all. Such decisive demonstrations of the uselessness of magic were, of course, lacking in the olden time, and the failure of a charm to accomplish what was desired could always be explained by some unfavorable circumstance, such as the omission of some necessary rite or the ill-humor of the spirit whose coöperation was necessary. It should be remembered also that the absence of the accustomed charm produces an adverse psychological effect on those depending on them. I am told that both Karen and Burman boys who play football, have a "medicine" to protect them from injury and to bring victory. Without this talisman, which has its counterpart in the mascot of some American baseball and football teams, the players are apt to do poorly and lose the game. In like manner a Karen, who attributes his indisposition to the evil influence of some one who is bewitching him, is likely to become worse through the power of suggestion; just as his fellow-villager, who has placed himself under the protective charms and remedies of the medicine-man, often derives benefit from his own faith in their efficiency.

795 789 791 In some outlying Karen districts there are still persons of both sexes among the Karens who profess to maintain communication with the powers of the invisible world. Of these "wi," so-called, one group has dealings with the powers of evil, while the other looks to "Y'wa," the eternal God, for the revelation of unseen things. The latter group is sometimes designated leaders of religion ("bu hko," heads of the feasts). The prophesies of the deliverance of the Karen from the Burman yoke and of the coming of the white brother were uttered by some of these "wi." The members of the former group are believed to be able to see into hell and to bring evil forces to bear on men. They go into trances and work themselves into a state of frenzy, writhing on the ground and frothing at the mouth until they have received a message. Then they calm down and deliver their oracle in verse. They are reputed to have often deceived their patrons. They are at enmity with the prophets of the second group. Their influence is limited to those of weak "so" or personal powers.[1] Not only have strong-

[1] See Chapter XXI on Religious Conceptions, p. 321.

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willed persons been able to resist their magic, but also in some instances have put the magic-workers to death. These "wi" are not supposed to be easily persuaded into exercising their sinister influence. It is said that they reserve their offices for the client who has suffered a real injury, or one whose distress is revealed by his tears, or one against whom seven malicious attempts have been made. Usually they are men of high-strung nervous temperament. Occasionally, other persons think themselves possessed of magic power ("pgha pgho") and try to use it for good or ill in influencing their own or some one else's life. However, a casual practitioner of the art must observe proper reticence in regard to such matters, or run the risk of falling into disrepute or of exciting the envy of some more experienced "wi." Many persons living in Karen villages at the present time are usually spoken of not as "wi," but as "k' thi thra" ("medicine-teachers" or doctors). They are very backward about referring to their art.

A class of persons supposed in the early days to be gifted with magical powers, consisted of the orphans and other unfortunates who were driven from the villages and compelled to live by themselves in the jungle.[1] In Karen folk-lore many tales recount episodes in which an orphan exercises his uncanny powers, usually in defense of some weaker person whom he saves or helps to get the better of his foes. One such story tells of a chief whose village had been raided again and again. Having no orphan magician at hand to aid him, he was beaten every time; while the victorious villages were every one of them blessed in having such a champion. The chief, anticipating another raid, sent his daughter away because he had no one else to give in ransom, should he be vanquished again. She ran through the jungle until she fell exhausted, and next morning was found by an orphan, one of seven brothers, near whose hut she had fallen. She related her story to the aged grandmother of the seven, and they were so captivated by her that they determined to aid her father in recovering the bronze drums and other treasure that he had surrendered, in order to save his village from destruction. Before the grandmother would consent to her grandsons' enterprise, she required them to make a trial of their strength. This they did by each catching a tusker elephant in the jungle, grasping him by the fore and hind legs and using him as a huge kind of battering-ram in knocking down a clump of bam-

[1] See pp. 122, 134.

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736 boos. Quite satisfied with this demonstration of their magic
● 789 power, the grandmother allowed them to go on their mission. In
538 the battle that followed the seven orphans severally engaged the champions of the seven victorious villages and won back for the maiden's father the treasure that he had been forced to pay over in the previous raids. The oldest of the brothers then received the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage, having cleared himself of the curse that had rested upon him as an orphan.

Why such extraordinary powers have been attributed to the once despised orphan is not known. At first he was feared for the bad luck he might bring to the other inhabitants of the village, if allowed to remain within the stockade. That he did not perish as an outcast in the jungle must have been regarded as a sort of miracle by the village community, whose members had always lived and worked together in close interdependence. They must have looked upon him with awe and believed that he was protected by some powerful influence, not only from the evilly disposed "Bgha" but also from the dangers of the forest. It was, therefore, natural enough to regard him in course of time as a person who had "pgho." In these later days orphans appear to have been considered less extraordinary persons, as indicated by the following couplet:

[539] "In olden times the orphans had magic.
Orphans now must talk" [like other persons].

791 The "k' thi thra" or "medicine-teachers" constitute another
753 group that should be mentioned among magic-workers. It is true
757 that they possess a rude knowledge of the efficacy of roots and herbs, but they also sometimes dispense disgusting and filthy concoctions. The Karen, like other primitive peoples, regard sickness as due to some mysterious force or "mana" and believe that all medicine, even that prescribed by European physicians, operates to dispel or vanquish this force. They expect a dose to cure immediately and discredit a medicine that must be taken repeatedly. Hence, in general, they prefer their native "medicine-teacher" and his nostrums to the educated physician and his medicine, the therapeutic effects of which are beyond their understanding. Doubtless, some Karens do distinguish between the charm and the drug, but most of them seem to cling to the idea that the drug has more or less of the charm connected with it.

784 Magic among the Karen, as among other primitive races, is divisible into white and black magic. The former is the beneficent

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kind, involving the use of certain rites, practices, and conceptions by which one tries to protect one's self against unknown powers and forces. White magic may be divided in turn into three varieties, namely, defensive, productive, and prognostic magic.

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As suggested by its name, defensive magic is employed to safeguard one from injury and to prolong one's life. Charms are used, such as the wild boar's tusk without a nerve cavity, to prevent the possessor from being wounded by the firing of a gun or the bolt from a crossbow. The tusk charm is called "soh."

The boar's tusk must be the tusk of an old and fierce animal (for the older the animal, the smaller the cavity), which was, therefore, hard to kill. This, according to Karen belief, renders its owner equally hard to destroy. Sometimes the tooth of an ancestor is worn, in order to gain the reputed courage and strength of the latter. A female wears such a charm around her neck. A man may wear it set in a finger-ring. The latter method of wearing the tooth would not serve in the case of a woman or giri, for unavoidably it would be brought in contact with her skirt and that would be disrespectful to the dead, thus destroying the value of the charm. A lock of hair or the parings of nails from a corpse are also frequently worn to prolong the life of the wearer.

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A certain plant of magic power, called "k' thi baw tho" or "tiger medicine" is said by the Karen to confer such immunity upon him who uses it that he may enter a den of fierce tigers at any time without the least fear.[4] It is also reported that by burying the root of this magic plant at the bottom of a hole seven cubits deep, pulling the root up with one's teeth, and jumping out—according to one of my informants—even when men are standing around the opening with sticks in their hands, one will be turned into a man-eating tiger and spend the remainder of his life in the jungle composing verses and springing down upon unwary persons. Certainly, one who can believe that a man can leap out of so deep a hole and dodge the blows of his fellows at the top, will experience no difficulty in believing the rest of this story.

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A second form of white magic is what is defined as productive magic. It has to do with increasing a crop, rendering a family prosperous, or adding children to the family circle. Certain plants of the ginger family *(Zingiberaceae)* growing in Burma are supposed to be endowed with the power of bringing a good crop production. Consequently, they are set out at the entrances of the

[4] *Karen Thesaurus*, new ed., Vol. I, pp. 643, ff.

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fields. A native reported to me an example of productive magic in connection with the finding of a spiral coil of heavy brass wire by his great aunt. The coil was from four to six inches in diameter and was unearthed by the aunt while digging a large yam in the jungle. The coil was carried home, but at first brought only misfortune. However, in the full moon of "Thadingyut" (Burmese for October) the aunt hit upon the happy idea of offering the blood of a red cock to the spiral coil, and in due time the family became prosperous. A failure to make the annual offering was followed by ill-fortune. The offering must not be made by an unchaste person or by one who had fallen out of the house during the year. The coil, which sometimes assumed human form, must not be approached too closely. It was believed to possess the power of foretelling the future when it appeared in human shape.

The red and yellow varieties of the flowering plant, cockscomb *(Amarantus)*, which grow abundantly in the hills, are reputed to have a beneficial effect on the crops. The red variety has the added virtue, according to various tales, of dazzling the eyes of pursuing spirits, which are so attracted by it that they forget any evil intent they may have had against persons or objects. A root taken from a red cockscomb found growing in a field three years after cultivation, if bound up in the turban of a husband, will prevent the wife from conceiving, according to Karen lore. The opposite result is attained by the women of Shwegyin by wearing the bones of the "Ta t'hkaw hkaw" (a one-legged female demon) as a necklace. They buy these bones from the Brecs.[1]

Black magic is bad magic or witchcraft. The Karen speak of it as "ta ho ta yaw" or sometimes as "ta ho ta lo," meaning to work evil on a person and thereby cause his death. It is difficult to learn very much about the practices involved in the art, for those who exercise it are prone to keep their methods secret, revealing them, if at all, to one or two intimates only and thus preventing their secrets from losing their potency. By blowing on a cup of water that is later to be handed to the intended victim, the worker of black magic imparts to it a baleful action that will cause him to sicken and die. A quid of betel blown upon in the same way may be thrown at the person intended to be harmed, and, if it strikes him, will produce the fatal result desired. Some sorcerers pretend to have the power of inducing a lingering disease, which after a year or two will terminate the life of their victims. Other methods

[1] See Chapter XXII on Supernatural and Mythical Beings, p. 223.

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774 792 755 he got a satisfactory divination, placed some rice, cooked chicken, and liquor on a tray and drew it along the floor of the house to the top of the ladder at the entrance. He then ran a string from the tray down the ladder to the ground for the old woman's "k' la" or shade to come up on. The "k' la" did not return because, as the witch-doctor explained, it was held captive in a betel-box by some one. Thereupon, he asked for seven cubits of white cloth, wound it about himself, and lay down to sleep with a "dah" (large knife) and an axe on either side of him. With the shades of these tools in hand his "k' la" was to go and release the shade or spirit of the grandmother. On awaking, the witch-doctor reported that he had had a hard struggle and been shot at by the man who was restraining the old woman's spirit from returning, but that he had succeeded in releasing it. When the doctor unwrapped himself, so the granddaughter of the patient told me, the cloth was riddled with what appeared to be shot holes. The string on the ladder was broken, showing conclusively that the "k' la" had returned at last. A piece of this string was now tied around the patient's wrist to prevent her spirit from again escaping. Needless to say, the old woman recovered her health.

764 789 A ceremony is sometimes observed among the Karen to keep the "k' la" of a deceased person from aimlessly wandering about and to beguile it into remaining with the corpse, until it shall depart to the king of spirits. In this ceremony the coffined body is placed in the center of the floor. A slender rod of bamboo is inserted in a hole in the coffin lid, a thread reaching from the tip of the bamboo to the floor. This thread has small tufts of cotton and bits of charcoal tied to it in alternate order throughout its length. Under the loose end of the thread a small cup containing a hard-boiled egg is placed. A silver or brass ring hangs at the end of the thread just over the cup. In case the thread is drawn downward with some force so that it vibrates or breaks, the "k' la" is supposed to have returned from its wanderings, otherwise not. Colonel MacMahon relates that he watched an experiment of this kind, but that when he required everybody to go a considerable distance from the cup, nothing happened.[8]

826 828 Among the Karen and Burmese the abdomen is held to be the seat of the passions and the diseases, varying moods and bodily

[8] A similar ceremony is gone through at noon of the last day of the funeral rites. See *ante*, p. 237: Col. A. R. MacMahon, *The Karens of the Golden Chersonese*, p. 138; Cross, in the *Journal, American Oriental Society*, Vol. I.

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[2] See pp. 133, 134.